

Response to Amendment

The amendment received on April 16, 2009 is acknowledged and entered. Claim 1 has been amended. Claims 11-21 and 25-29 have been canceled. No claims have been added. Claims 1-10 and 22-24 are currently pending.

Drawings

The drawings are objected to because portions of the drawings are informal and drawn by hand ; and the drawings fail to comply with 37 CFR 1.84(p)(4) because reference character "1" has been used to designate both "mailpiece" and "mail item". Corrected drawing sheets in compliance with 37 CFR 1.121(d) are required in reply to the Office action to avoid abandonment of the application. Any amended replacement drawing sheet should include all of the figures appearing on the immediate prior version of the sheet, even if only one figure is being amended. Each drawing sheet submitted after the filing date of an application must be labeled in the top margin as either "Replacement Sheet" or "New Sheet" pursuant to 37 CFR 1.121(d). If the changes are not accepted by the examiner, the applicant will be notified and informed of any required corrective action in the next Office action. The objection to the drawings will not be held in abeyance.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 101

The claim rejections under 35 USC 101 have been withdrawn due to Applicant's amendment.

EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it **MUST** be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Ronald Reichman (Reg. No. 26,796) on July 29, 2009.

The application has been amended as follows:

ABTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A method and apparatus ~~are provided~~ for tracking a special service delivery by a carrier of a mail item created by an office worker. The method utilizes one or more special service indicators on the mail item to ensure that the office worker can obtain information about the status of the mail item by the simple placement of one of the special service stickers on the mail item.

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A method for tracking a special service delivery by a carrier of a mail item created by an office worker, the method ~~utilizes a computer to perform the~~ comprising the computer-implemented steps of:

applying a special service indicator to the mail item during creation of the mail item;

sending the mail item to a mail room for final processing prior to submitting the mail item to the carrier for the special service delivery;

automatically detecting at the mail room the special service indicator on the mail item and determining the special service delivery required based on the detection of the special service indicator;

applying at the mail room a unique office worker generated identifier to the mail item, the unique identifier including an electronic address of a company server;

submitting the mail item with the unique identifier thereon to the carrier for the special service delivery;

receiving from the carrier at the electronic address obtained by the carrier from the unique identifier on the mail item information relating to the location of the mail item;

storing the information relating to the location of the mail item at the company server; and

providing the office worker with access to the company server to obtain the information relating to the location of the mail item.

2. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the special service indicator is a specific color associated the special service delivery.

3. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as recited in claim 2, wherein at the mail room the specific color is automatically detected and identified to determine the special service delivery required by the mail item.

4. (Currently Amended) ~~[[A]] The~~ method as recited in claim 3, wherein the specific color is selected from a plurality of different colors, each of the plurality of different colors serving as an indicator of a different special service delivery requirement.

5. (Currently Amended) ~~[[A]] The~~ method as recited in claim 1, wherein the special service indicator is a label.

6. (Currently Amended) ~~[[A]] The~~ method as recited in claim 1, wherein the special service indicator is printed on the mail item.

7. (Currently Amended) ~~[[A]] The~~ method as recited in claim 1, wherein the special service indicator is machine readable.

8. (Currently Amended) ~~[[A]] The~~ method as recited in claim 1, wherein the information relating to the mail item includes an image of the mail item.

9. (Currently Amended) ~~[[A]] The~~ method as recited in claim 8, wherein the information relating to the location of the mail item further includes date, time, and location data.

10. (currently Amended) ~~[[A]]~~ The method as recited in claim 1, wherein automatically detecting the special service indicator is accomplished using a mailing machine.

11.- 21.(Canceled)

22. (Currently Amended) ~~[[A]]~~ The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the mail item is in a receptacle containing other mail items.

23. (Currently Amended) ~~[[A]]~~ The method as recited in claim 22, wherein the location of the receptacle is determined.

24. (Currently Amended) ~~[[A]]~~ The method as recited in claim 23, wherein the location of the mail item is determined by knowing the location of the receptacle.

25. - 29. (Canceled)

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 1-10 and 22-24 are allowed.

The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

1. As per independent claim 1, the best prior art, Gelfer (US PG Pub. 2002/0046194) while disclosing a postal system, franking machine, and label allowing

tracking and tracing of postal items; Bennett et al. (US Patent Number 7,117,170), while disclosing an apparatus, systems and methods for applying billing options for multiple carriers for online, multi-carrier, multi-service parcel shipping management; and Wilz, Sr. et al. (US Patent Number 6,510,997), while disclosing a hand-supportable bar code symbol reading device having an integrated world wide web (www) browser command generator for automatically generating www browser program commands to initiate the execution of hypertext transmission protocol (http) requests does not disclose or fairly teach:

automatically detecting at the mail room the special service indicator on the mail item and determining the special service delivery required based on the detection of the special service indicator;

applying at the mail room a unique office worker generated identifier to the mail item, the unique identifier including an electronic address of a company server;

submitting the mail item with the unique identifier thereon to the carrier for the special service delivery;

receiving from the carrier at the electronic address obtained by the carrier from the unique identifier on the mail item information relating to the location of the mail item;

storing the information relating to the location of the mail item at the company server; and

providing the office worker with access to the company server to obtain the information relating to the location of the mail item.

2. The best NPL prior art, "UPS Backgrounder: When Is Package Tracking, Really Tracking?" does not disclose or fairly teach:

automatically detecting at the mail room the special service indicator on the mail item and determining the special service delivery required based on the detection of the special service indicator;

applying at the mail room a unique office worker generated identifier to the mail item, the unique identifier including an electronic address of a company server;

submitting the mail item with the unique identifier thereon to the carrier for the special service delivery;

receiving from the carrier at the electronic address obtained by the carrier from the unique identifier on the mail item information relating to the location of the mail item;

storing the information relating to the location of the mail item at the company server; and

providing the office worker with access to the company server to obtain the information relating to the location of the mail item.

3. The remaining dependent claims are considered allowable, as they are dependent and based off of an allowable independent claim.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Freda A. Nelson whose telephone number is (571) 272-7076. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday - Friday, 10:00 am –6:30 pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, John Hayes can be reached on 571-272-6708. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

/Freda A Nelson/

Examiner, Art Unit 3628

/JOHN W HAYES/

Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 3628